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after a greeting to the children and a rapturous reply from them, was as to the identity of the School, "Is this the Francis W. Parker School?" When the children assured him that it was, he produced a huge order-book and found the place where there were entries of toys. "I have here an order for twenty sleds. Are they ready?" A small spokesman came forward, "They are all ready and are like this one, and we want them to go to the Orphans' Home." The other items were checked in the same manner, and then Santa Claus, who had to hurry off to another school, suddenly remembered that he had some stockings in his pack for these children, and gave them out by grades as labeled. One child from each grade received the stocking assigned to it, holding a little conversation with Santa Claus at the same time, thanking him for the gifts and asking again anxiously whether the articles made to order were really satisfactory. Being reassured the children were satisfied, and after Santa Claus had said, "Good-bye, a Merry Christmas to all," the children with their guests went back to their own rooms—or their homes, with the happy confidence that they had made some one else's Christmas happier, and had done the thing which they had contracted to do. This feeling of something well done, undoubtedly adds to their joy in the real Christmas season.

NOTE: Although the enlarged school and growing thought has changed and modified details somewhat, this article written by Mrs. Webster, many years Home Economics teacher in the school, has been retained. It preserves the school tradition and indicates a conviction of the school that, together with the beautiful, reverent service which interprets and enriches the spiritual significance of the day, there should go in the school, as in the home, the frolic and fun that is the right of children on this, their special day of all the year.

THE STORY OF THE NATIVITY

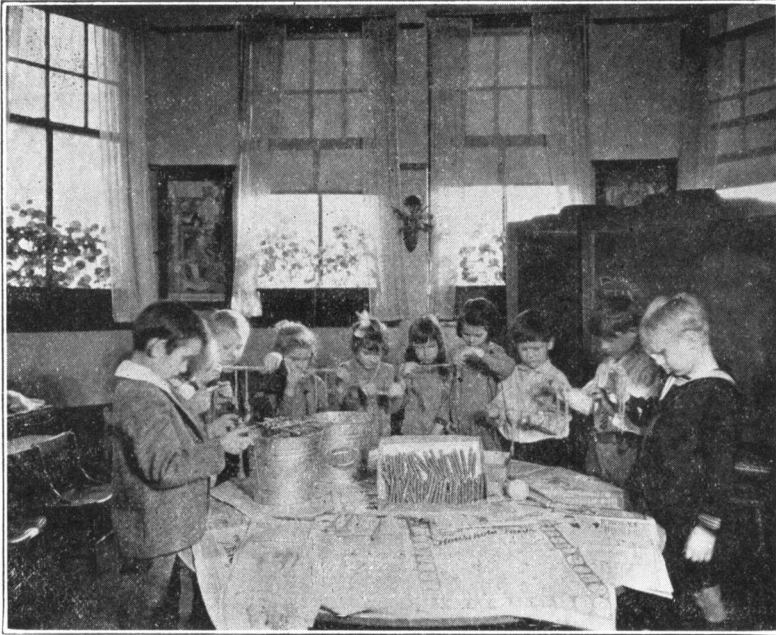
HATTIE A. WALKER

Preparation for Christmas in the First Grade

Immediately after Thanksgiving the first-grade children begin to prepare for Christmas. In their own room they make and fill with cotton a mattress and pillows for a large doll's bed which has been mended in the shop. For this bed they hem the sheets and pillow slips and embroider a blanket. They trim a Christmas tree and decorate it with many colored stars and figures of animals which they have drawn and painted. They dip candles and fasten them upon the tree for a wishing party which is given to the seniors. Each child makes a wish for a senior and blows out his candle, and in turn each senior makes a wish and blows out his candle. After all is finished the Christmas tree is given to the Children's Memorial Hospital and the doll bed is sent to a kindergarten.

The joyful thought of giving and making happiness for others is felt in all the children's work. They make many gifts to take home: candy boxes filled with candy of their own making, glasses of jelly which were made in the fall and kept for a gift, clay bowls with a bulb

which they raised to decorate the Christmas table, and a candle holder and candle ready to be lighted Christmas Eve. Christmas songs are sung, Christmas legends are told, and the story of the Christ Child (Luke 2: 7-20) is learned. The telling of this story is the first grade's contribution to the Christmas services.



First Grade Dipping Candles

There are many wonderful stories and legends connected with Christmas, but the story of the Christ Child as told in the second chapter of Luke is most beautiful of all, and tends to develop in the child an ethical and spiritual sense. It is so simply written that any child can understand it, and it is in the form of a series of word pictures so graphic that it appeals to the child's imagination. It is taught because it is a wonderful piece of literature. This story is a series of pictures and each is taken separately, studied carefully, and then committed to memory; but at every lesson the story is told as a whole, so that it may be heard and felt as a unit.

First of all a study is made, through pictures and descriptions, of the country about Bethlehem and Jerusalem. In the pictures the children see the heavily-laden camels and asses in caravans going in and out of the cities, and these suggest that the caravans may be coming to bring goods from far-away countries, or crowds of people coming to the city to pay taxes. This needs some explanation. The children see that

both men and women wear long flowing robes, wear turbans on their heads, and so build a picture of the country and some idea of the customs of the people. Then they are ready for the study from Luke, and the only change made in the telling is the use of the word "Mary" in the seventh verse instead of "she." When we talk of the babe's brothers and sisters, the children feel what a glorious thing it is to have a tiny creature come into their household. It is the center of all joy, not only of fathers and mothers, but friends and relatives who come to visit and bring their love and gifts. They themselves have been given to father and mother to make them happy, and in this, the Nativity Story, a baby has been given to the whole world to make it better and happier.

As we go over the story, picturing the details again and again, the children learn it by heart. All the children are able to repeat the story, but not with the same degree of feeling. Some are more imaginative and more expressive than others, but all seem to catch much of the real spirit, and gradually there comes a feeling of love for it and a sense that it must be told in the most beautiful manner.

In imagination the children cross the sea to the little town of Bethlehem. They go to the inn where the Christ Child was born. The teacher reads:

"And Mary brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn."

The children are told that Mary and Joseph had come here to pay their taxes. They had found crowds of people. They had gone from one inn to another, but at last they had come to a place where cows, and asses and sheep were kept; and here they rested and the little child was born. It is explained that Mary wrapped her little son in many folds of cloth, and that even now in some countries, people wind folds of cloth around their tiny babies. The children look at a picture and they see Joseph standing, looking down at Mary, and the little child lying in a manger near her.

The thought is now directed to the hillside where the shepherds are keeping watch over their flocks. The children learn that the shepherds stay with their flocks night and day, for the sheep might run away and get lost, or wolves might come and kill them. It is pleasant out there on the hillside, for the shepherds sing songs, tell stories, and watch the moon and the wonderful stars. Sometimes a star flashes across the dark blue sky, and then again one seems to drop down to the ground. The night in the story was different from other nights; it was a wonderful night, for the story says:

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night.

"And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid."

The angel spoke gently and the shepherds forgot to be afraid and listened, for it says: "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

By this the angel meant: "Do not be afraid, for I am bringing good news to every one in the world, a child has been born who will teach all people how to be kind, gentle, helpful, and truthful." In explaining the following verse where the angel says: "And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger," the children were told that the thought of the angel was, that if the shepherds found the babe lying in a manger, they might be certain that this was truly the Christ-child.

The next verse tells of the shepherds seeing not only one but many angels, singing and praising God.

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying

'Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.'"

In the last verse the angels meant that there should be no more war upon the earth, and that all men should become friends. Then the picture changes, and in imagination the children see the shepherds alone with their flocks. The wondrous light has faded from the sky and the angels have gone.

"And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, 'Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.'

"And they came with haste and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

"And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

"And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds."

A picture is shown to the children of the shepherds kneeling before the child, and another picture showing the babe in the manger near the mother. They see Joseph looking at Mary and the child, while the shepherds stand with bowed heads. It is made plain that after the shepherds had seen the Christ-child they felt certain that everything the angels had said was true, and that they went away and told everyone what they had heard and seen. They told of their visit to Mary and Joseph, and of finding the little Christ-child lying in the manger. The shepherds' story was so wonderful that the people did not know what to think or say—"But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." This means that Mary thought over and over again of

the visit of the shepherds; of the story they told her, and of the wonderful child which God had given her.

The last verse of this story gives a picture of the shepherds going back to their flocks: "And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them." And we see them going up the hillside, singing songs of praise and thanking God, because they had heard the angels and had seen the Christ-child.

Next, the children see in imagination three kings riding upon camels. They had come to see the Christ-child. They had traveled many miles to see him; they had crossed deserts and plains; they had passed through cities and towns and had found the little child lying in a manger in the stable. These kings had come because it had been said many, many years before that a king would be born, and they had been watching for a sign. At last they had seen a wonderful star in the east and had followed it. It led them to Bethlehem and stood over the place where the little child lay. The kings brought precious gifts to this wonderful child. They worshiped him and went away rejoicing.

THE CHRISTMAS SERVICES

HELEN GOODRICH¹

Preparation for the Christmas services, one for grades one to seven and the other for grades eight to twelve, is a serious and on the whole a devoted work. The children love their Christmas songs and the older ones enjoy singing with the beautiful accompaniments furnished by a group of thirteen orchestra men, and they feel the importance of singing to a large, quiet audience of grown-ups.

During the last week rehearsals are given precedence on the school program. Until the final one with the orchestra, they are usually not over thirty-five minutes long.

The assembly room is decorated in green and silver. There are two large, beautiful fir trees, whose dark foliage shows plainly through a network of delicate silver lines. The room is lighted by flood lights thrown upon the two great trees and by two large candles at the grand piano which stands amid the singers clustered in front of the stage. The children come in during a quiet improvisation of an old carol. There results a certain unity in the older children's singing, based upon the school tradition of many years, worked out through the form of the services, and through the cooperation and contribution of teachers who agree in spirit and general method. The younger children's service is always most lovely and touching.

¹Comments on the programs and their evolution by John Merrill.